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CONDITIONS IN SOVIET BALTIC REPUBLICS  
DESCRIBED BY EYEWITNESSES AND OTHER SOURCES

ESTONIAN REFUGEES IN SWEDEN REPORT -- Latvija, No 3, 11 Jan 50

At the end of 1949, three Estonians escaped from the Estonian island of Saaremaa (Oesel) in a fishing boat. Due to a heavy fog they were able to evade the Russian coastal defense guards and came to Sweden. Despite the protests of the Soviet Legation, the Swedes gave refuge to the three Estonians and placed them in a specially protected camp. The newly arrived Estonians confirmed the news that the Russians were hurrying to rebuild their merchant ships and to adapt them for military purposes. The Estonians gave the following report of political, economic and social conditions in Estonia:

The present number of Estonians in Estonia is estimated at about 300,000 to 400,000. Large-scale deportations and a long period of oppression have greatly weakened the Estonians' power of resistance.

Education in primary schools (and incomplete secondary schools) has been reduced to about 50 percent. Naturally, "special subjects" have been added to the program, such as Leninism, Marxism, and the Short Course on the History of the Communist Party. Two thirds of the students attending Estonian schools are Russians, and only one third are Estonians. The percentage of teachers is about the same.

In recent months, all Estonians over 65 years of age, as well as those who are unable to work or suffer from tuberculosis, have been deported from Estonia to an unknown destination. It is rumored in Estonia that these people are sent to special extermination camps.

Food supplies in Estonia have been greatly reduced. There has been a price increase on all consumers' goods, including textiles and shoes. Living conditions in kolkhozes are very poor. In many places the farmers have to live on potatoes and oatmeal. The large deliveries of grain to the state must be fulfilled and even exceeded, without regard for the needs of the kolkhoz farmer himself. Living

- 1 -

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conditions in Latvia are said to be slightly better, however still far from satisfactory. Rural residents eat the meat of wild animals which they trap. There have been cases where even the meat of foxes and badgers has been used for food. During and after the war foxes have multiplied considerably and they often wander into farm yards during the daytime.

Conditions in cities are slightly better. Although a workday is from 9 to 11 hours, people have more freedom to move around and can buy the most essential food in stores. It is also easier to obtain medical aid in case of illness or accidents. In the country it is extremely difficult to get a doctor.

In the fall of 1946, a general replacement of janitors took place in Tallin and other cities. This was apparently caused by the necessity to have a reliable informant in each house. Building administrators are almost invariably members of the Communist Party.

Municipal hospitals are headed only by Russians who have Party membership but very little medical knowledge. It is considered obligatory to buy Communist literature, which is distributed at places of employment, at election meetings, and at other gatherings. Failure to attend Red Army or Komsomol meetings is regarded as a demonstration of anti-Soviet attitude, or even as subversion.

Country residents who come to the city without a written permit from the militia are severely punished. Last summer, a 17-year-old Estonian girl from Pechori came to Tallin. Unable to show the train conductor the necessary permit or to pay the fine, she was arrested and given 6 months in prison.

Social life is completely paralyzed. It is impossible to visit friends, as one is followed everywhere by the MVD. Even if good friends spend a few hours together, or celebrate a birthday, it is necessary to give full explanations the following day to the militia. Attendance at churches is dangerous for people who have more than a primary-school education. The MVD is of the opinion that such people go to church only to demonstrate their anti-bolshevist attitude.

The escaped Estonians were assured that they could now consider themselves in safety, whereupon one of them replied: "We have come here to tell the world that only about one third of the entire Estonian population is still alive and hopes that the other nations will not let these 300,000 Estonians be destroyed completely."

LETTER FROM ESTONIA -- Latvija, No 101, 14 Oct 47

An immigrant living in Sydney, Australia, received the following letter from a relative in Soviet Estonia:

"We are all very well. Do not send us any food parcels or letters, as we do not wish to receive anything from capitalist countries. Our life is now entirely different than it used to be. We have a room, and my salary is sufficient to buy what we need. Yuku and Manni are better off than the rest of us. They and their mother are very well. They have a 3-room apartment, which you would be able to use if you would return home. Come back by all means!"

Yuku and Manni were the children of the addressee. They and their mother died before the war. Their three rooms are three graves.

Even a Soviet censor was unable to stop the truth from getting out of the Soviet Union.

- 2 -

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DESCRIBES DEPORTATIONS FROM LITHUANIA -- Latvija, No 99, 12 Oct 49

The Information Department of the Latvian Central Committee [in Germany] has come into possession of a Soviet "top secret" document, which contains directions regarding deportations from Lithuania. As these deportations are carried out in all parts of the Soviet Union according to the same plan, the directions in this document apply equally well to Latvia.

All persons suspected of anti-Soviet attitudes and anti-Communist activities are divided into nine groups. In special subdivisions the persons are grouped by their professions, social standing, or affiliation with some former organization. The deportees include not only Lithuanians, but also Poles, Ukrainians and Jews. Deportation affects school children, former land owners, police officials, merchants, clerics, office workers, ex-soldiers; there is hardly any profession that is not mentioned in this list.

Lithuanians residing in Germany must be sure to remember that a special section is provided in the secret document for registering persons repatriated from Germany. Also, a special list is kept of all persons who have relatives in Germany or who correspond with persons outside Lithuania. Naturally, the same secret orders would be issued in Latvia, only in this case the document came from Lithuania.

The secret order states that "evidence" regarding suspects must be obtained with the greatest secrecy, and that not even the militia must know the real purpose for which information is collected. Information must be collected at passport-issuing offices and grain-procurement centers, but principally from reports of agents (spies!), which are received through local MVD officials.

A questionnaire is to be compiled on each deportee, containing detailed information regarding his family, property, obligations, social relations, etc. Material collected by the agents should be added to the questionnaire. For instance, in determining the property status of a farmer, it must be shown how much land, how many horses, livestock, and machinery he owns, whether he has any extra income, etc.

It is not possible to estimate the number of deportees from this secret document, as the exact number of persons to be deported has not yet been entered. It is clear from this document, however, that each person living in Lithuania, Latvia, or Estonia, regardless of class, sex, or profession, is subject to one fate -- being deported for slave labor. Everyone there can be accused of an anti-Soviet attitude.

- E N D -

- 3 -

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